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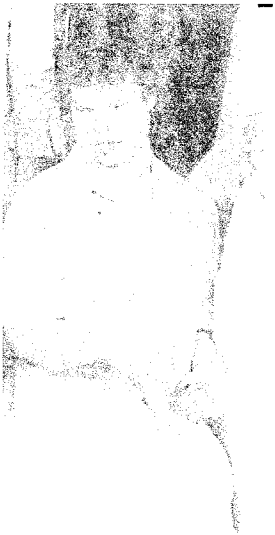
Madame Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Jan Wenaas and Jan Wenaas and I live in Great Falls, MT. I am the mother of a 30-year old young lady who has multiple disabilities. My daughter Jodi lived at home for many years and presently lives in a group home served by Quality Life Concepts in Great Falls. Jodi also attends a sheltered workshop Monday through Friday with Easter Seals.

As an active parent in my daughter's life I have been involved with services for persons with developmental disabilities over the past 30 years. As such I have been continually concerned in the lack of value we as a society place on providing services not only for our citizens with developmental disabilities, but other people needing care such as our elderly. We expect the people caring for our sons, daughters, mothers and fathers, those who we care deeply for, to do so with minimal training and very low wages. The staff caring for our children and adults are not paid or trained commensurate with the responsibility we require of them. Most of these very caring professionals have families of their own and cannot afford health insurance to care for themselves or their families. It is unacceptable that we are not doing everything we can to ensure direct care staff are offered opportunities for career development and make wages

comparable to professionals working in state operated facilities. As a parent I would like my daughter, Jodi, to be a taxpayer some day. We all deserve to develop to our greatest potential. Prioritizing the worth of those that require assistance from others will result in the greater good for us all.

I presently am serving as Chairperson of the Montana Council on Developmental Disabilities. Our Council supports self-determination and personal choice for all persons. We also support comprehensive training for direct support professionals working in the field of developmental disabilities, such as the College of Direct Support. MCDD strongly supports the benefit of health insurance for personal-care attendants working in the field of human services.

Over the past few legislative sessions parents, self-advocates and staff have advocated for direct support professionals to be paid wages commensurate with those of their peers working in state operated facilities. I sincerely hope this legislative session will address this long overdue need to address direct care wages.

And lastly our Council supports transportation options for persons with disabilities in their communities. In rural Montana, this is not an option but a necessity. I thank you for your time in listening to my voice that I feel is a voice for many who cannot speak for themselves.

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